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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twentieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 516th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 19 January 1999, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Guinea (CRC/C/3/Add.48; HRI/CORE/1/Add.80; CRC/C/Q/GUI/1; written replies by the Government of Guinea to the questions raised in the list of issues) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Guinea took places at the Committee table.

2. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea) said that, upon her return to Guinea, she would hold a press conference to inform the public how the Government had replied to the questions asked by the Committee and what the Committee's recommendations had been.

3. She was not in a position to say what the national defence budget was, but five out of the six countries bordering upon Guinea were engaged in civil wars or armed conflicts, and the Government had therefore had to take drastic steps to ensure its own people's security and that of the millions of refugees on its territory. One seventh of the population consisted of refugees, 60 per cent of whom were women and children, and that weighed very heavily on the national budget.

4. The highest level of follow-up mechanism for the Convention within the Government was the National Commission on Population and Human Resources, composed of the seven ministers responsible for the national development plan, agriculture, health, education and social affairs; it met once every six months to monitor implementation of the Convention. There was also a specialized subcommission on children's rights.

5. Income tax rates depended, of course, on the level of income, some people not being taxed at all. Some of the Government's programmes concerned with children had been exempted from the payment of taxes over the past 12 months, despite the structural adjustment programme in place.

6. Mr. DORÉ (Guinea) said that the National Programme of Action (NPA) took account of the distribution of expenditure among the Government's partners in the field, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Government itself. What NGOs did in the field was often modified by national policy priorities. Concretely, in the matter of pre-school education, the Programme consisted of nursery schools in the rural areas that relied on community efforts to get children to attend them. In the urban areas, private interests were encouraged to open nursery schools, and the State was building schools designed to inspire the private sector. Education had been liberalized in Guinea in 1984 and private-sector nursery schools had begun to appear.

7. The Government not only encouraged child workers to defend their rights and turn to their own associations for support, it also combated the most serious forms of child labour through a programme aimed at reducing the number of children forced to work in order to survive. There were plans to build

reintegration centres for those children and to separate children from adults in penal institutions. Girls working as street vendors attended literacy centres and "second chance" centres in order to learn a trade or go to school.

8. Mr. KEITA (Guinea) said that the "20-20" initiative meant that 20 per cent of the national development budget was allocated to the social sector in exchange for bilateral aid, which took the form of forgiveness of 20 per cent of the national debt. In 1999, social sector spending would reach 18.78 per cent of the budget and the 20 per cent target would be reached by the end of 2001.

9. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions concerning the definition of the child, general principles, and civil rights and freedoms.

10. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO said that, according to the initial report, men under 18 years and women under 17 years could not contract marriage (para. 15). She would like to know what practical steps were taken to enforce that law, particularly in the rural areas. Moreover, the gender-based age difference for marriage constituted discrimination and should be eliminated. As to the age of recruitment for the army, the report stated that measures were being adopted to eliminate that discrimination (para. 16). She would like to hear what those measures were and whether girls were required to do national service. Children were released from compulsory schooling at the age of 16 (para. 17): and it would be interesting to learn what steps were taken to ensure that they stayed in school until that age.

11. Young persons under the age of 16 could be hired for work only with the consent of the authority upon which they depended (para. 17). That usually meant the parents, which could be dangerous for children, particularly children from families with economic problems, who would be pushed out to work without finishing their compulsory schooling. Were there any measures to prevent that type of situation?

12. The report also acknowledged the existence of discrimination by reason of birth against children born out of wedlock and children of adultery and incest (para. 23), stating that the legislature had taken account of the sociocultural context. The matter should be reconsidered, as such children must have the same rights as all others.

13. The report further acknowledged that girls did not inherit from their fathers. That constituted discrimination, and steps must be taken to alter that situation. The report referred to the need for a large-scale campaign of dissemination, information and sensitization to bring citizens to settle their succession differences before the courts. The Government should also take into account the situation of children born out of wedlock so as to enable them to enjoy their rights, particularly those enshrined in the Convention.

14. Mr. DORÉ (Guinea) said that the minimum age limits for marriage of 18 for men and 16 for women, were specified in the Family Code, although some exceptions could be made. The Code also provided that no young person could marry without the consent of his parents or guardians. Every person had the right to a paternal or family name and one or more first names. Children born

out of wedlock whose filiation was established in respect of one parent only took that parent's name. An attempt had been made to settle problems of succession without distinction as to filiation or sex.

15. Structures existed to enable children to express their opinions in traditional society without shocking adults and attempts were being made to transform the traditional "joking relations" (parentés à plaisanterie) into modern forms of expression; the Children's Parliament was one such example.

16. All births on Guinean territory had to be declared. It was true that that requirement was not applied strictly in all rural areas, but efforts were under way to make it easier to locate birth certificates, with dates of birth being recorded in village notebooks kept in Arabic or French.

17. Parents' irresponsibility towards their children was severely punished under the Penal Code, as were crimes against newborn babies, incitement to debauchery, crimes against children and young people and abuse of the needs of juveniles. In addition, there was a campaign during every month of June, the month of the Guinean child, when attempts were made to publicize all those legal provisions, as citizens were often not familiar with the law.

18. Mrs. MBOI said that her earlier questions about the age of sexual consent and medical consultation had still not been answered, nor had she found out whether any indicators had been developed and data collected on all the rights under the Convention, particularly with respect to the children of refugees and migrant workers. She wished to know whether the Government had a central statistical bureau to facilitate data collection.

19. Was there a separate section within the National Programme of Action in which children would be considered as citizens in their own right, and not just as part of the plan of action for women? Had the Government's evaluation of training and dissemination efforts made a difference; had the training really helped to change attitudes towards children?

20. According to information received, there was a political commitment in Guinea to improve the human rights situation there. The main human rights NGOs had been recognized, particularly the Guinean Organization of Human Rights, which was playing a key role in the promotion and protection of human rights. Did that organization concern itself also with the rights of the child in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights in general? Were the rights of children put forward as real problems for consideration by the Government?

21. According to the report, legislation protected the best interests of the child, but she would like some examples. In the case of a divorce or a dispute over a child, for example, she would like to know what action a judge would take to protect the best interests of the child. Upon ratification, the Convention automatically became a part of domestic law but it was unclear how that worked in practice in the legal system.

22. Infant mortality rates were very high and she wondered whether that was due to abortions. She wished to know, therefore, what the statistics were for maternal mortality resulting from botched abortions, whether abortions were legal and, if so, what was being done to protect the right to life of unborn infants.

23. Mrs. PALME said that, according to the statistics, there were far more boys than girls in school. In addition, girls did not have equal inheritance rights in Muslim Guinean society. She asked the delegation to elaborate. Were the rights of children born out of wedlock not recognized? Did Guinea intend to ratify the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption and ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment? Could children discuss matters of concern to them with their parents and in school settings? She was worried by the statement in the report indicating a possibly old-fashioned patriarchal attitude in Guinean society. More information was needed on the Children's Parliament and the mayors' association, which were very important initiatives.

24. Mr. RABAH said that, with respect to the right of inheritance, Guinean legislation made no distinction between the sexes but the Muslim community, which constituted two thirds of the population, did so. Had the Government entered any reservations to the Convention in that regard and, if not, how did it explain that discrimination? The delegation had indicated that corporal punishment was prohibited by the Penal Code; that presumably meant that a child thus abused by his parents or by someone else could complain to the courts. Examples would be useful. With regard to the age of criminal liability, it appeared that children could not be sentenced before reaching the age of 18. He wished to know, therefore, what happened to those who committed offences before reaching that age. In the event of divorce, children under the age of seven were, according to the report, entrusted to their mothers. If that was always the case, it would seem that the judge was not empowered to consider the best interests of the child, whereby the children of divorced parents might be entrusted to their father or, indeed, to other persons.

25. Mr. KOLOSOV, having asked whether the Guinean authorities were in favour of the amendment to the Convention by which the membership of the Committee would be increased from 10 to 18, said that the age of majority in Guinea was currently set at 21 years, so that young people aged 18 to 21 were not protected by the Convention, which applied only to persons under 18. Since such persons were not regarded as full citizens either, they were in a very uncomfortable situation. In other countries where that situation applied, serious consideration was being given to lowering the age of majority to 18. The Guinean Government should examine that possibility.

26. He recommended that consideration should be given to introducing compulsory birth registration for immigrant families, since the Convention required that child rights should apply to all children under a State party's jurisdiction. The use of the term "legitimate" in paragraphs 51 and 52 of the initial report should be replaced by less discriminatory terminology.

27. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked whether any agreement existed between Guinea and its neighbours with regard to the birth registration of refugee children. The Committee had been informed about the ways in which participation rights were exercised in the public sphere, but not about the ways in which they were guaranteed within the family. What was being done to raise parents' understanding of their children's right to express their views and participate in issues that were important to their well-being?

28. Mrs. SARDENBERG, having welcomed the global approach adopted by the State party, as reflected in the celebration of Children's Day, said that the momentum thus achieved could be used to convey the holistic nature of children's rights. Had any studies been carried out on the impact of ethnic tensions on children? Was the Government concerned by the evident disparities between male and female adults and children and between the rural and urban populations? Had any programmes or measures been introduced with a view to achieving a more balanced enjoyment of rights, particularly for girl children, for instance by reducing the disparity in illiteracy rates. Was the Committee on Equity between Girls and Boys active in the homes and in the schools to counter the problem of domestic violence which obviously affected children?

29. With respect to paragraph 9 of the list of issues and the corresponding written reply, she would like to know whether the Government had taken any steps to reduce discrimination against girl children in school, particularly when they were pregnant? In the light of the provisions contained in article 12 of the Convention, she was concerned by the information that, since children belonged to their parents, the enjoyment of their rights was subject to parental permission. Did people understand the significance of birth registration as a basis of citizenship and was there any disparity between the number of births and the number of registrations?

30. Mrs. PALME asked whether there was any intention to amend the laws relating to traditional practices so as to ensure that the right not to be subjected to torture was respected.

31. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the information to which children might be exposed through advances in technology was censored in any way. Given that children were considered to be virtually chattels of the family, she wondered what society's attitude to corporal punishment was. The fact that children were imprisoned with adults provided considerable potential for cruel treatment. In the matter of child participation, which aspects of the Convention elicited most response when it was discussed by children?

32. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea), replying to the question concerning the censorship of violent material, said that the Ministries of Education and Culture had conducted awareness-raising campaigns and that the Interministerial Council and the National Information Council had issued directives that violent films should not be shown on television or in the cinema.

33. By way of example of the involvement of human rights organizations in the area of child rights, a joint discussion of child rights as human rights between the Guinea Organization of Human Rights, the National Teachers' Union and the Association of Women Jurists had concluded that children's rights were on a par with those of any adult, however prominent. Such discussions served to raise awareness of the Convention.

34. On the subject of inheritance, positive law contained no discrimination against women, but customary practice on occasion prevailed over theory. The situation would be remedied only when parents and women themselves became aware that such discrimination was not acceptable. The harmonization of Koranic law and positive law was under study.

35. The low level of school attendance by girls was not to be attributed solely to poverty but also to other factors such as inappropriate curriculum content which failed to respond to the population's practical concerns. In some outlying rural areas, no school existed within daily travelling distance. That problem could not be solved by the Ministry of Education alone but called for concerted action in a number of different spheres, which was hampered by the excessively sectoral approach of aid donors.

36. The effectiveness of the training on Convention rights for law-enforcement personnel, judges and teachers was apparent in the reduction in the level of violence against children in areas where such training programmes had been offered. While the custody of children under the age of seven had formerly been automatically given to mothers after a divorce, the new Family Code was based on the best interests of the child and provided for the possibility of awarding custody to the father or to a third person. That approach was consistent with customary law under which nephews and nieces had the same right to full protection as a couple's own children.

37. It was indeed unfortunate that the new Family Code did not provide the same rights to children born of incest as to other children. However, the question was an extremely sensitive one in Guinea and the mere mention of the subject in the text had almost caused the entire Code to be rejected. It had therefore been decided to concentrate on mainstream children and to provide for consideration on a case-by-case basis of the situation of children born of incest.

38. Ways and means were being found to respect children's views in Guinean society. Cases of corporal punishment had indeed been reported and were generally referred to the Legal Aid Centre which investigated the complaint and decided on appropriate action.

39. In regard to refugees, the national borders in the region were entirely artificial, with the result that a single ethnic group, with a single language, might be divided between two or more countries. Extensive migration occurred between the countries of the subregion and, under the Constitution of Guinea, refugees enjoyed the same protection as nationals.

40. Mrs. DIABY (Guinea) said that, in the event of a divorce, a social inquiry might be conducted to ascertain the child's best interests and children over the age of 13 could be interviewed by the judge responsible for awarding custody.

41. Turning to the matter of the protection of rights, she said that Guinea had ratified all the essential international instruments that had a bearing on the rights of children, and that the Guinean courts proceeded in conformity with the law. The Ministry for Social Affairs, Women and Children assisted and counselled women, particularly illiterate women, concerning problems related to, inter alia, maintenance obligations and abandonment, and helped them to prepare their cases and submit them to the competent judge. Although Guinea was in a period of active legal reform, and the Civil Code had been updated in 1998, no changes had been made in the provisions governing birth registration.

42. It was important to recognize that the Government of Guinea had undertaken considerable efforts on behalf of refugees, and especially refugee children with special needs, such as unaccompanied children. With the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry had developed a programme that conducted research, at the regional level, to find the parents of such children, and to reunite them with their families. In conformity with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions, the Guinean Government consulted the appropriate embassies with a view to returning children whose parents could not be found to their countries of origin.

43. Under domestic law, all children born on Guinean soil had a right to citizenship when they attained the age of majority. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) managed a programme which coordinated the birth registration of refugees. Under the previous Civil Code, the time limit for registration had been three days; the new Civil Code had extended that period to 15 days in order to make it easier for parents to register their newborn children.

44. Any person who engaged in sexual relations with a minor under the age of 13 was punishable under criminal law. The law did not specify the age at which a child could consult a doctor in his own right. As a general rule, however, a child was treated as a member of the family until the age of 15. After that age, he could consult a doctor on his own; many services and centres were available, including those which provided reproductive health services.

45. Guinean law explicitly protected the right to life and the physical integrity of the person. Under the Penal Code, acts of violence against any individual were forbidden; sentences were heavier for violence committed against a child. Although the national laws governing inheritance made no distinction between girls and boys, there were significant discrepancies in some communities between law and practice. If, however, the relatives of a child appealed to the courts, the judge was obliged to take a decision in conformity with the law. Unfortunately, however, national laws were sometimes overlooked or misunderstood by those responsible for enforcing them.

46. The law distinguished between legitimate children, natural children, legitimized children, and children born of adultery or incest. A child born of an adulterous relationship could appeal to the courts for paternal recognition but was entitled only to subsistence, which meant food. Such a child was considered a social embarrassment in Guinea, and such matters were rarely even discussed.

47. Lastly, she was sure that the Government would willingly consider ratifying the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, since domestic law already provided for both international and national adoption.

48. Mr. DORÉ (Guinea) said that Guinea had established a network of parent associations the purpose of which was to encourage illiterate parents to send their children to school. It was difficult to assess to what extent parents and children were familiar with the rights of the child. The Government had, however, put up posters and signs in public places and markets, drawing

attention to the Convention. Corporal punishment had been effectively prohibited in virtually all public and private schools. Classroom visits showed that the behaviour of teachers had changed. Under the law, school chores were the same for boys and girls, and discriminatory practices against girls had begun to abate. Boys carried water and swept floors, tasks traditionally assigned to girls.

49. A grave problem in Guinea was the traditional use of young children in mines to dig for gems and precious metals. The Government had conducted a campaign to inform employers and union leaders that the use of children in mines was prohibited, and had set up observatories to monitor the mining areas.

50. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea) said that Guinean children enjoyed the fundamental right to talk to their parents but that, as a result of increasing poverty and the flight from the land, parents were often too tired to devote much time to their children. The Government had, however, launched a series of television programmes to encourage dialogue between parents and children.

51. Violence was a problem of significant concern in Guinean society: parents must be encouraged to understand that a child who was brought up in an atmosphere of violence inevitably grew up to be violent and that, in order to lead a successful and happy life, a child must be brought up in a peaceful home. Efforts were being made to identify mechanisms that would introduce a sense of harmony and equilibrium into Guinean family life.

52. The delegation was unaware whether there existed an agreement between Guinea and neighbouring countries concerning the matter of birth registration. The situation was an exceptional one: civil conflict had erupted in those countries, bringing floods of refugees into Guinea. In the previous 10 years, the refugee population had grown to be one seventh of the total, constituting a heavy burden on the national budget and the country's natural resources. In fact, the influx of refugees had destroyed one third of the country's forests. Guinea nevertheless wished to provide a haven for persons in distress.

53. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the delegation to reply to the questions raised in the list of issues concerning family environment and alternative care, basic health and welfare, and education, leisure and cultural activities.

54. Mrs. DARABA (Guinea) said that the laws governing divorce in Guinea were among the most stringent in the region, designed as they were to protect the integrity of the family unit. Under the terms of the new Family Code, a child was placed with the parent most likely to guarantee his security. When, however, the parents were not married, the child belonged to the mother. Private care institutions were subject to strict controls to ensure that a child grew up in the best possible circumstances. With the exception of the SOS children's villages, all Guinean orphanages were managed by women. Some former inhabitants of those orphanages had grown up to hold important positions in society and Government and were currently contributing to their support.

55. It was a deplorable fact that more infants and more were being abandoned. A person who found such a child and did not wish to adopt him was obliged to inform the authorities; the child was then placed in an orphanage and grew up in the care of the State.

56. Community life played an important role in the upbringing of a child in Africa. When a child was abused, it was often the neighbours who lodged a complaint. Such a case would be brought first of all before the local authorities, who would decide whether to solve the problem locally or to refer the case to the courts. The Government had taken measures to publicize in the mass media the problem of parental violence against children.

57. It was important to remember that an unenforced law was of value to no one. Furthermore, Guinea had a high illiteracy rate. Before introducing new legislation, therefore the Government endeavoured to seek the views of the public with regard to the problem in question. Once a law was enacted, it sought to introduce it to the population through participatory measures. If local administrators did not accept or recognize a law, it could not be enforced.

58. In reply to the question concerning traditional medicine, she said that Guinea was a pioneer in that field and had a division within the Ministry of Health which dealt with traditional medicine and herbal remedies. University training for doctors and chemists contained a traditional medicine module and about 80 per cent of scientific degree theses were devoted to traditional medicine and herbs. The age-old opprobrium suffered by traditional medicine was on the way out, scientific studies having proven that it was a valuable resource once it had been denuded of quackery and swindling. Some 70 per cent of the population, especially in the rural areas, resorted first of all to traditional medicine. Guinea's national health policy was far in advance of many other countries with regard to traditional medicine; it had two traditional medical institutes, and she herself, as a specialist in traditional medicine, was negotiating with a bank to set up an African herbal remedies outlet.

59. On the situation of children with disabilities living outside special institutions, she explained that the State had itself created a situation of social injustice by establishing a "solidarity city", catering for 71 out of the country's 500,000 handicapped children, at quite a high cost, while the needs of the rest of those children remained unmet. The Government had since closed that establishment down and redirected its efforts to vocational training centres for young people with disabilities. In so doing, it was implementing the concept that disabled people constituted an integral part of society. The philosophy underlying their treatment was to reintegrate them into their original communities. Support was being provided by the University by various ministries and by a number of NGOs.

60. A five-year programme on adolescent health had been established with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to ensure that sex education was available for young people nationwide. Through agreements signed in 1998, support for that effort was also provided by a number of donor organizations and specialized NGOs.

61. With regard to measures to prevent and combat traditional practices harmful to the health of children, especially female genital mutilation, she said that the Government was endeavouring to raise awareness and to find other sources of income - such as the cultivation of medicinal plants - for the women who performed that operation. While the training would take some time, she was convinced that the practice would gradually disappear.

62. Mr. DORÉ (Guinea), said that his Government had striven to develop human resources and make the elementary schools accessible to all children of the appropriate age. The result had been an annual average growth rate of 11.7 per cent, the emphasis having been placed on enrolment of girls. Drop-out rates had plummeted in both primary and secondary schools as a result of the incentive measures generated by the decentralization policy. Parents' associations had helped encourage the enrolment of children in school. In addition, nursery school attendance by children between the ages of 3 and 4 appeared to encourage them to settle into primary and secondary education.

63. Human rights education would be incorporated into the curriculum. Human rights, however, depended more on the functioning of democratic institutions. The very real separation of the executive branch from the legislature and the legislature from the judiciary meant that those branches all made separate contributions to the inhabitants' enjoyment of their rights. In that regard, training was also essential to ensure that all citizens were aware of their rights and how to defend them.

64. The CHAIRPERSON asked if the members of the Committee had any supplementary questions to put to the delegation.

65. Mrs. MBOI, said that, while paragraphs 76 and 77 of the initial report covered treatment of children separated from their parents in various instances of family breakdown, they were silent on the subject of ill-treatment and abuse - including sexual abuse - within the family. She wished to know what was being done to prevent such treatment in both natural and foster families, what programmes and services were available for the rehabilitation of abused children, and whether any programmes existed for treatment of abusers in order to prevent the perpetuation of such behaviour.

66. On the subject of adoption, she wished to know what was being done to discourage child traffic and the illicit transfer of children by means of informal adoption, especially in rural areas and where a household was headed by a poor woman.

67. On the topic of health and basic welfare, she was happy to learn that the Government was receiving international cooperation from various United Nations funds and agencies. There was still, however, many lacunae in the data on teenage pregnancies. Some 68 per cent of the women hospitalized for abortion complications were adolescents. She hoped that the Government was attempting to establish reliable statistics for Guinea since they were a prerequisite for effective policies, programmes and services.

68. She was alarmed at the high rates of malnutrition and of child mortality and morbidity attributable to diseases controllable by means of low-cost interventions. Had the Government given any consideration to international

cooperation with, for instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) in respect of health reform or integrated health management and the provision of health-care financing, with a particular focus on malnutrition?

69. She regretted that more recent statistics on HIV/AIDS had not been supplied. The Committee's concern was not only with the increasing numbers of children suffering from HIV/AIDS, but also with the impact the disease could have on children generally. Was there any aggressive strategy to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS and to counteract their impact upon children.

70. On the subject of reproductive health, she noted the problem of high fertility rates and low contraception use. She hoped that the problem could be attenuated with the support Guinea was receiving from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). However, she would like more information on how the Government planned to assist the families concerned.

71. While congratulating the Government on the strides it had made in the acceptance of traditional medicine, she wondered whether steps were being taken to protect children, in particular, from the misuse of herbal remedies.

72. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO commended the Guinean Government's interest in traditional medicine. In view of the problems relating to the literacy and training of traditional doctors, however, she suggested that consideration might be given to exchanging experience within the subregion. She wondered whether, as in the case of her own country, traditional products were accepted for sale by modern chemists; whether there was any collaboration between such chemists and the practitioners of traditional medicine and whether they exchanged information. She was greatly concerned, however, about the dosage of traditional medicines administered, as well as the enemas and forced feeding to which children were subjected. While aware that efforts were under way to discourage such unhealthy practices, she would like to know what difficulties had been encountered.

73. She congratulated the Government of Guinea on its progress with the eradication of female genital mutilation and urged it to develop its programmes aimed at discouraging women from resorting thereto. She would be interested to hear whether there was any system to denounce those who insisted on doing so, whether there was any monitoring mechanism and what punishment was in store for offenders.

74. She was unclear as to the meaning of the social assistance provided for the handicapped. What was the country doing to make the disabled more active and independent rather than mere recipients of welfare? She also wished to know what progress had been made with the elaboration of the sectoral policy document for management of handicapped persons referred to in paragraph 237 of the initial report.

75. Faced with the fact that increasing numbers of young people in the subregion were exposed to alcohol and drugs which precipitated accidents, including traffic accidents, she asked whether any plans were afoot for their protection.

76. Mr. KOLOSOV asked if it was true that there were insufficient recreational facilities for children, a dearth of specialized children's libraries and few specialized health centres for children suffering from HIV/AIDS.

77. He wondered whether the coexistence of State and private schools had led to disparities between rich and poor and between the salaries of teachers in the two types of school. He asked whether any special legislation had been established to ensure that the minimum standards required by article 29 of the Convention were met in schools of all types, including private schools.

78. Mrs. PALME said she wondered what further action could be taken to accelerate the increase in school enrolment rates. Referring to the observation in paragraph 142 of the initial report that enjoyment of the right to education had been strongly compromised by the earlier non-performance of the system, she wondered whether thought had been given in the country's planning to the adoption of the 20-20 approach between donors and Government, with a view to catering for all children.

79. She asked what plans Guinea had to combat the visible effects of poverty on health and education, combined with a supportive attitude to parental interaction, linking children's health care to their pre-school education.

80. Mr. RABAH, said he would like further information on the private institutions in which children with disabilities and children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS were placed. He also requests further details concerning the budget, as well as Government statistics in those areas.

81. Mrs. MOKHUANE, remarking on the high incidence of malnutrition asked whether there were any educational projects to teach pregnant women how to nurture their children after birth. Also, given the high illiteracy rate, she would like to know whether there were any programmes to encourage mother-child interaction in the interests of the child's psychosocial development.

82. While the delegation had spoken about education in general, it had not mentioned specialized education. She wondered whether there was any national programmes or legislation for implementing and monitoring specialized education and, if so, what obstacles they had encountered. She also wished to know whether there was a national policy to supplement the food needs of poor children at school and how successful it was.

83. She asked for details of suicide rates, the reasons for suicide and the methods used.

84. The initial report stated that one preventive measure used to combat alcoholism was restrictions on advertising; she wondered whether it had been successful. Given the large numbers of refugees in Guinea from neighbouring countries, she wished to know what steps had been taken, in compliance with article 39 of the Convention, for the psychosocial integration and rehabilitation of children who had been exposed to gross atrocities.

85. Mrs. MBOI said she wondered whether it would be possible to increase the 3 per cent of the national budget allocated to health in order to combat

Guinea's many preventable health problems and whether international and technical cooperation was needed for programmes and services to fight rising drug and substance abuse among the 10 to 18 age group. While the initial report claimed vast improvements in drop-out and enrolment rates between 1990 and 1994, the statistics showed that the global rate of abandonment had considerably worsened. She asked for statistics of the developments since 1994.

86. Mrs. SARDENBERG asked what mechanism was in place to guarantee the rights of children placed with relatives following the break-up of their families. Given the delegation's admission of strong parental authority in Guinea, were there arranged marriages based on interests other than those of the child? Was sex education for teenagers provided in the schools? What programmes existed for training schoolchildren for participation in society and were textbooks and curricula free of gender stereotyping?

87. The CHAIRPERSON, observing that disability measures were apparently restricted to the deaf and dumb, asked what facilities existed for children with motor and mental disabilities and how society and their families reacted to them. Was general teacher training adequate for Guinea's educational needs? If not, how did that lack and the pupil/teacher ratio affect the drop-out rate? She also wished to know the incidence of polygamy and its impact on children.

The meeting rose at 6.04 p.m.